

## Chapter 6 Voters and Voter Behavior

### Section 1: The Constitution and the Right to vote

- I. The History of Voting Rights
  1. The right to vote
    1. Suffrage
    2. Franchise
  2. The Constitution reserves the regulation of voting rights to each state
  3. At the time of the Constitution, you could only vote if you were a white male property owner (had to be worth a certain amount or own so much land)
  4. Sometimes this was based on religion, or paying taxes, your race and usually your gender
    1. Very few widowed women and free blacks were given the right to vote
  5. What is the American electorate?
    1. Potential voting population
    2. Anyone 18 years of age and older
    3. Anyone who is a citizen of the United States
  6. Five stages to extend voting rights to everyone
    1. Getting rid of religious qualifications
      - a. By 1810, there were no further states that required religious tests for voting
    2. The 15<sup>th</sup> amendment guarantees voting privileges regardless of race or color
      - a. African Americans were continually denied voting rights until the 1960's
    3. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment guarantees voting privileges regardless of gender
    4. Voting Rights Act of 1965
      - a. Gave African Americans full voting rights with no restrictions
      - b. 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment gave the residents of the District of Columbia the right to vote in presidential elections
      - c. 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment eliminated any poll tax
        1. Poll tax: money paid for the privilege to vote
      - d. 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment set a national voting age at 18

7. Five restrictions on the power given to the states to regulate voting
  1. Anyone with permission to vote in state elections, has the right to vote for national elections
  2. No state can deny anyone the right to vote because of race, color, or previous servitude
  3. No state can deny anyone the right to vote based on gender
  4. No state can require payment of a poll tax for any federal election
  5. No state can deny a person over the age of 18 the right to vote

## II. Voter Qualifications Among the States

### 1. Citizenship

1. Typically non citizens are denied the right to vote in the U.S. but the Constitution doesn't say they can't vote
2. Some states have requirements for how long you must be a U.S. citizen in order to vote
3. Very few non citizens vote or try to vote
  - a. Those that do might believe they are citizens or are passing themselves off as citizens on election day

### 2. Residence

1. Most states require that a person live in the state for at least some period of time
  - a. The average is 30 days
  - b. Some states are as low as 10 days while Arizona has a 50 day residency requirement
2. Why is residency important?
  - a. Keep people from being bribed to vote for a certain person
  - b. To give people time to become familiar with the candidates
3. Temporary Residency
  - a. College students, travelling salesman, military usually do not vote in the state where they are temporarily residing in.
  - b. May be registered in another state
  - c. Can vote by absentee ballot

### 3. Age

1. 26<sup>th</sup> amendment sets 18 as the minimum age for voting in any election.

2. In some states, if you are 17 when it is time for primary elections but will be 18 in time for the general election, you may register to vote provided you meet all other qualifications

4. Other qualifications

1. Registration

- a. procedure of voter identification intended to prevent fraudulent voting
- b. Gives election officials a list of those persons who are qualified to vote in an election
- c. Lasts for life unless...
  - 1. You die
  - 2. You move
  - 3. You are committed to a mental institution
  - 4. You don't vote for a certain number of years

2. Literacy

- a. Voting restricted based on whether or not you can read
- b. In some states it was read and write
- c. Often used to discourage some groups from voting (especially in the south against African Americans)
- d. Sometimes required to read, write, and understand

3. Tax Payment

- a. Done away with when the 24<sup>th</sup> amendment was passed and ended the poll tax
- b. Poll tax: special tax that had to be paid before a person could vote

4. Who May NOT Vote

- a. Those convicted of a serious crime
- b. Those dishonorably discharged from the military (some states)
- c. Vagrants
- d. Polygamists

### III. NonVoting

1. Idiots: Greek word for citizens who did not vote or otherwise take part in public life and were ignorant of public affairs
2. Why don't people vote?
  1. Cannot-Voters
    - a. People who are resident aliens
      1. For the most part, states do not allow non-citizens to vote
      2. More than 6 million people are non-residents
    - b. Persons who have to travel suddenly and unexpectedly
    - c. Persons in mental health facilities
    - d. Persons who will not vote for religious reasons
    - e. Discrimination based on race or religion
  2. Actual Non-voters
    - a. People who choose not to vote
      1. It won't make a difference
      2. No matter who wins, the country will go on how it is
      3. The power of the people is really in the hands of those with political power
      4. Election procedures
        - i. Registration
        - ii. Long ballots
        - iii. Long lines
      5. Lack of Interest
  3. What factors determine who votes on election day?
    - a. Weather
    - b. Socioeconomic status
    - c. How invested a person is in the community
    - d. Strong belief in political parties

#### IV. Voter Behavior

##### A. Factors that influence voters

##### 1. Sociology: Study of groups and how people behave within groups

###### a. Income and Occupation

1. Higher income people are more likely to vote republican
  - i. Business and Professional people
  - ii. Others with higher earned income
2. Lower income people are more likely to vote democrat
  - i. Manual workers
  - ii. Those with lower income

###### b. Education

1. Close relationship between education level and voting
2. College graduates tend to vote more often as Republicans than those who are high school graduates only

###### c. Gender and Age

1. Men and women tend to vote differently with women voting more often Democratic
2. Younger voters are more likely to vote Democrat while older voters are more likely to vote Republican

###### d. Religious and Ethnic Background

1. Northern protestants are more likely to vote Republican while Catholics and Jews are more likely to vote Democrat
2. Non whites tend to support the Democratic party

###### e. Geography: locale in which a person lives

1. Southerners are often Democrats
2. Northerners are often Republicans
3. Smaller cities tend to vote Republican
4. Larger cities tend to vote Democrat

###### f. Family and other group affiliation

1. Typically people in the same family vote in the same or similar ways

## 2. Psychological

- a. Party Identification: Loyalty of people to a political party
  - 1. Tends to be a lasting predictor of how a person will vote
  - 2. Straight-ticket voting: voting for only one parties candidates in an election
  - 3. Split-ticket voting: practice of voting for candidates of more than one party in an election
- b. Candidates and Issues
  - 1. The impression a candidate makes on the voting public
  - 2. What is going in the world at the moment... how much emotion is involved, what is voter awareness of issues, how are they presented to the electorate